

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6151

As Passed Senate, February 10, 1996

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Providing two superior court positions for Thurston county.

Sponsors: Senator Smith; by request of Administrator for the Courts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/9/96 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 1/23/96, 1/24/96 [DP].

Passed Senate, 2/10/96, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Smith, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Johnson, Long, McCaslin, Quigley, Roach and Schow.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Drew, Fraser, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Johnson, Long, McDonald, Moyer, Roach, Sheldon, Spanel, Strannigan, West and Winsley.

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: By statute, the Legislature determines the number of superior court judicial positions in each county. Thurston County currently has six superior court judges. The county has experienced growth in the number of cases filed and tried in its superior court.

The Washington State Administrator for the Courts has conducted a "weighted caseload" study and estimates that Thurston County needs additional superior court judges to handle the current caseload.

The Washington State Constitution provides that the state and counties share the salary expense for superior court judges. Other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

Summary of Bill: Two additional superior court judicial positions are authorized for Thurston County, increasing the number of superior court judicial positions in Thurston

County from six to eight. One judicial position is effective July 1, 1996; the second judicial position is effective July 1, 2000. Thurston County is responsible for the cost associated with the additional judicial positions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 5, 1996.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For (Law & Justice): Thurston County has agreed to fund the judicial positions and the voters of the county have already approved the funds to house the first judge.

Testimony Against (Law & Justice): None.

Testified (Law & Justice): Chuck Foster, AFC (pro); Judge Tom McPhee (pro).

Testimony For (Ways & Means): The weighted caseload analysis performed by the Administrator for the Courts demonstrates the need for additional judicial positions. Thurston County officials support the bill and have adopted a facility plan to accommodate the new judges.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): Tom McPhee, Thurston Co. Superior Court Judge.